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ABSTRACT

A study investigated whether male and female tutors, as institutional representatives, use the same pragmatic features in their language. Ten graduate-student writing tutors, five male and five female, were recorded in sessions with both male and female students at a university writing center. Transcripts were analyzed for turn transition type (latch, pause, interruption), time at talk (mean number of words per turn), frequency of suggestions (mean suggestions per turn), suggestion type selected (indirect, interrogative, first-person modal, second-person modal, imperative), and mitigation strategy (mitigated vs. unmitigated). Results indicate that female time at talk was greater, female tutors used interruption more often for turn transition, made somewhat more suggestions, and favored first- and second-person modal strategies rather than the imperatives chosen by male tutors. However, males were more likely to mitigate their suggestions. Interactional and pragmatic features were also examined for male and female tutors with same- and different-sex students. These results are compared with literature on male/female language in institutional settings. Indications are that gender may influence interaction patterns and suggestions selection and mitigation, but overall, as institutional representatives, male and female tutors' language may be more similar than different. Contains 39 references. (Author/MSE)

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Tutors as Male and Female: Gendered Language in Writing Conferences

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Abstract

Do female tutors as institutional representatives employ the same interactional and pragmatic features in their language as male tutors do? Ten graduate-student writing tutors, five male and five female, were recorded in sessions with both male and female tutees at a university writing center. Transcripts were analyzed and coded for turn transition type (latch, pause, or interruption), time at talk (mean number of words per turn), frequency of suggestions (mean suggestions per turn); suggestion type selected (indirect, interrogative, first-person modal, second-person modal, or imperative), and mitigation strategy (mitigated vs. unmitigated).

Results suggest that male and female language differs. Female time at talk was greater, and female tutors resorted more often to interruption when taking the floor. Female tutors also made somewhat more suggestions to their tutees, and favored first- and second-person modal strategies rather than the imperatives chosen by male tutors. These, however, were more likely to mitigate their suggestions. Interactional and pragmatic features were also examined for male and female tutors with same- and different-sex tutees.

The study results are compared with literature on male/female language in institutional settings. Indications are that in some cases gender may have a greater influence on interaction patterns and on suggestion selection and mitigation, but the results overall suggest that as institutional representatives, male and female tutors' language may be more similar than it is different. Results may be helpful in answering the question of whether women as institutional representatives modify linguistic features typical of "women's language," and whether the power differential in institutional encounters cancels out "the gender effect."

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Tutors as Male and Female: Gendered Language in Writing Conferences

Gender and Institutional Interaction

As a sociolinguistic variable, gender has figured prominently in research on conversational interaction. Two primary assumptions underlie such research, contrastive and yet complementary. The "dominance" approach, advanced by such researchers as Thorne and Henley (1975) and West (1990), among others, is based on the view that language encodes and perpetuates social status relationships. As males are accorded more power in our society, it is claimed that their language reflects and imposes that power differential. The "cultural" approach, first proposed by Maltz and Borker (1982) and further developed by Coates and Cameron (1993), Holmes (1995), Tannen (1993) and others, sees that males and females are members of different speech communities. Therefore, linguistic means used by each gender can serve either the aims of dominance or solidarity. These two theories, with their rather different sets of assumptions, have guided most research on language and gender in the past two decades.

A third theory, speech accommodation, has been advanced by such researchers as Bilous and Krauss (1988) and Mulac, Wiemann, Widenmann, and Gibson (1988). They point out that two of the weaknesses of the dominance approach are its focus on the genders of the initiators of communicative acts and not that of the recipients, and its failure to investigate the impact of the speech situation on dominance behavior of both males and females. Speech accommodation theory holds that conversational behaviors may converge (become more similar) or diverge (become more dissimilar) from those of the recipient (Bilous & Krauss, 1988, p. 184). Despite its intuitive appeal, speech accomodation theory has only occasionally been used to explain gendered language use outside of speech communication research.

Investigations of gender as a factor in language use in institutional contexts include those of West (1984, 1990) on doctor-patient interaction, and of Craig and Pitts (1990), Beattie (1981), and Brooks (1982) on tutor or teacher interaction with students. These researchers, as a rule, have begun with the assumption of male dominance. Studies of both group and dyadic interaction

have found, overall, that the effect of status is greater than that of gender; that is, female institutional representatives, though less dominant than their male counterparts, were still more dominant that either their male or female student interlocutors.

Writing Tutorials as Institutional Discourse

How do writing tutorials compare with other institutional discourse contexts? The language of tutorials is more conversational and far less routinized, "scripted," or predictable, than, for example, the language of the classroom, courtroom, or news interview. The overall structure of the tutorial is similar to that of the medical consultation, although the graduate student tutor has considerably less status than a physician. It also seems that tutors, like physicians, view appointments as ask-and-advise service encounters rather than as personal conversations. However, this is not the ideal conveyed to tutors in their training; in fact, they are admonished to be "coaches rather than fixers." Perhaps this characterization is closer to that of psychotherapists, in the sense that these professionals are trained to avoid giving authoritative answers and often deny their expertise (ten Have, 1989, p. 128). If tutorials are like therapy sessions, a game of "nudging" rather than supplying overt advice, they place the tutor and student in closer social proximity and at a much more equal status than many other institutional representatives and their clients.

In the context of higher education, writing tutorials also share some features with academic advising sessions (reported on by Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1990) and academic counseling interviews (reported on by He, 1993a, 1993b). It is the role of both academic advisors and counselors to uphold and transmit institutional rules. In addition, academic advisors, in their classroom incarnations as professors, transmit discipline- and course-specific rules in interaction; as colleagues-in-formation of their graduate student "apprentices," they uphold the rules of the "Discourse" of academe (Rudolph, 1994). Writing tutors, on the other hand, uphold broadly constituted principles such as "good writing." Here again, they may be seen to more closely resemble therapists than they do either academic advisors or counselors, as they are largely

neutral with respect to "higher" rules. They are forbidden from evaluating assignments posed by students' instructors and at the same time from hazarding a guess as to such instructors' ultimate evaluations of the student's writing. The advice they give is locally constituted, focused primarily on a particular piece of writing or on skills to be applied to other writing tasks. There is little chance their tutees will ever see them in another role.

Despite these status-equating forces at work in writing conferences, discourse analyses of tutorials (Sperling, 1994; Ulichny & Watson-Gegeo, 1987; Walker & Elias, 1987) as well as my own previous work (Thonus, 1995a, 1995b) concur that a defining feature is the tutor's dominance as expressed through topic and conversational control. This perception of tutor dominance flies in the face of the "view from the trenches" of tutorials as one-on-one encounters deemed more collaborative and less status-bound than formal instruction.

Interactional and Pragmatic Features

The interactional features investigated in this paper are first, time at talk, or what Tannen (1993) calls "volubility," and second, interruptions. Both have been cited in the literature, though not unanimously, as measures of dominance in conversational interaction. A directive speech act, the suggestion, was chosen as the focus of pragmatic analysis in this paper for the following reasons:

(1) Suggestions provide a particularly clear "window" into participants' perceptions of role and status: "Because compelling the actions of another implies power or rights to do so, directive performance is a sensitive--if enormously complicated--reflection of power relationships between individuals" (Fitch, 1994, p. 53).

(2) As tutors are explicitly trained to avoid directives because they are viewed as a means of dominating interaction, the use and selection of suggestion types is of particular contextual interest.

(3) Of the possible objects of analysis in writing tutorials, suggestions are probably the most face-threatening to the recipient and thus one of the most likely to be mitigated (Leech, 1983).

Tutorial suggestions are embedded in evaluation-suggestion sequences that take the following shape:

(1) Student evaluation of difficulties with the assignment.

(2) Tutor evaluation of global or specific problems.

(3) Student acceptance or rejection of the evaluation (verbal or tacit).

(4) Tutor suggestion (occasionally substituted or augmented by a student suggestion).

(5) Student acceptance or rejection of the suggestion.

Step (1) in the sequence usually occurs at the beginning of the tutorial, while other steps are more closely sequenced, stretching over many turns or just a few. This extract (Appendix) shows an example of such a sequence, with suggestions in bold print. The sequence is a bit atypical because it also includes a student self-suggestion, expressed as a question to the tutor. Note also that student acceptance or rejection of the tutor's suggestions is disallowed because the tutor introduces an abrupt topic change at the end.

Hypotheses

While I do not discount the explanatory power of the "cultural difference" approach to gendered language, the "dominance" approach better lends itself to the examination of the language of male and female institutional representatives within the framework of institutional discourse. I therefore predicted that in comparison with tutors who are less dominant (females), tutors who are more dominant (males) would:

(1) spend more time at talk;

(2) interrupt more frequently at turn transitions;

(3) offer their students more suggestions;

(4) choose more direct suggestion types; and

(5) produce fewer mitigated suggestions.

More general research questions include:

(1) Do female tutors as institutional representatives employ the same interactional and pragmatic features in their language as male tutors do?

(2) Does higher status in some way mitigate the effect of gender differences?

Procedure

As part of an ongoing research project by the Indiana University Campuswide Writing Program, 20 tutorials conducted at Writing Tutorial Services were taped and transcribed in their entirety. Tutorials, which varied in length from 20 to 60 minutes or more, were conducted by ten tutors, five male and five female, each paired with a male and female student. Table 1 shows the ten graduate-student tutors and students classified by tutor sex and major area, and student sex and paper content area. All tutors were seeing their tutees for the first time, with the exception of Tutor 7 with M and with F, and Tutor 11 with F, which were repeat visits.

Analysis

Interactional Features

Time at talk. The number of tutor and student words in each tutorial were summed and then divided by the number of turns, defined as a conversational exchange, that is, one tutor floor plus one student floor.

Interruptions. Three transition types were coded: (1) the latch, in which one turn smoothly follows another; (2) the pause, in which several seconds pass between the abandonment of the floor by one party and its taking by a second; and (3) the interruption, in which one party has not yet relinquished the floor before a second takes it.

Table 1

Tutor and Student Information

Tutor	Sex	Tutor Major Area	Student	Student Paper Content Area
1	M	English	F	Business
		English	M	Business
2	M	English	F	Biology
		English	M	English (composition)
3	F	English	F	History
		English	M	Biology
4	F	Linguistics	F	English (composition)
		Linguistics	M	English (composition)
6	F	History	F	Telecommunications
		History	M	History
7	F	History	*F	Political Science
		History	*M	Anthropology
8	F	English	F	Comparative Literature
		English	M	English (composition)
9	M	English	F	English (literature)
		English	M	Speech
10	M	History & Philosophy of Science	F	Sociology
		History & Philosophy o Science	M	English (composition)
11	M	English	*F	English (composition)
		English	M	Business

* Repeat visit

Pragmatic Features

Frequency of suggestions. In each tutorial, suggestions by tutors to students were coded and summed. Frequency of suggestions was then calculated as number of suggestions divided by number of turns.

Suggestion type. Ten suggestion types were coded in the transcripts. These consisted of five suggestion formulas arranged according to increasing illocutionary force, plus or minus mitigation (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989; Fraser & Nolen, 1981; Holmes, 1984; Leech 1983). This pairing of suggestion formula with mitigation strategy created a veritable banquet of pragmatic choices from unmitigated indirect suggestions to mitigated imperatives. Table 2 provides some examples.

Mitigation strategy. Ten mitigation strategies appeared in the data and were labeled according to the Crosscultural Speech Acts Realization Project coding manual (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989): clause-external mitigators Alerter and Polite Marker, syntactic downgraders Aspect and Conditional Clause, and lexical-phrasal downgraders Appealer, Cajoler, Hedge, Downgrader, Subjectivizer, and Understater. Upgraders such as *really*, *very*, and *always*, which aggravate rather than mitigate utterances, were also counted. Table 3 gives some examples from the data collected.

Table 2

Tutor Suggestion Strategies (Tutor 11 with NSF)

1. Indirect (M):

   I think that by talking about this as a screen version, that will help to make a transition between this and this.

2. Indirect (U):

   And, and no quotes for titles of a movie or books, no quotes.

3. Interrogative (M):

   Why don't you go ahead and write what you just said, maybe on the back of this sheet right here?

4. Interrogative (U):

   So how would you link those, how would you link that in one sentence?

5. 1p modal (M):

   But if you think they're really part of the same point, I would, I would keep them together.

6. 1p modal (U):

   O.K. now we need a transition between this paragraph and the next paragraph.

7. 2p modal (M):

   Um or you could just say, "and the late nineteen hundreds," something like that.

8. 2p modal (U):

   And then you can talk about it like that.

9. Imperative (M):

   And then just write down the points that you made from each of them, O.K.?

10. Imperative (U):

    Start something like that.

Table 3

Tutor Mitigation Strategies

1. Alerter

   *It seems like you've got to make a stand, **my friend**.* (Tutor 11 with M)

2. Polite marker

   *Should you, should you put a reference to the graph, **do you think**?* (Tutor 2 with F)

3. Aspect

   *And **I'm also wondering** about whether you should insert page numbers after the quoted material to show where you got it from the source.* (Tutor 1 with F)

4. Conditional

   *I think you could just make it one paragraph even, **if that would make you feel better than breaking it into three**.* (Tutor 3 with M)

5. Appealer

   *Um so I think maybe "regulate" is better, **O.K.?*** (Tutor 6 with F)

6. Cajoler

   *And you have to give him, **you know**, a rope to hang himself with.* (Tutor 4 with F)

7. Hedge

   *This is, this is **sort of** what you often want to do in an essay.* (Tutor 10 with M)

8. Downgrader

   *Or **maybe** just put that, that part of the Miller Test up front.* (Tutor 7 with F)

9. Subjectivizer

   *And certainly emphasize, **I would think**, the difference.* (Tutor 9 with M)

10. Understater

    *I think you're right that you could work **a little bit** on your topic sentence.* (Tutor 8 with M)

(11. Upgrader)

    *You **always** have to go backwards and say, "What did that stand for?"* (Tutor 1 with F)

Results

Interactional Features

Time at talk. As shown in Table 4, all of the tutors registered more words per turn than their tutees, with the exception of Tutor 2 with F and M--cases in which the student actually spoke more--and Tutor 3 with M and Tutor 7 with F--cases in which tutor and student talking time was equivalent. When tutors were more voluble, the tutor-student ratios could be amazingly high, for example, Tutor 10 with M and Tutor 6 with F. Looking beyond these individual cases, however, female tutor time at talk was, on average, nearly twice that of male tutors. Three of the female tutors were more voluble with their female tutees, while two of them talked more with their male tutees.

Three of the male tutors were more voluble with their female tutees, while two of them talked more with their male tutees. From the student point of view, then, female tutees received more talk from both male and female tutors.

Interruptions. At turn transition points, female tutors were more likely to resort to interruption than were their male colleagues, as shown in Table 5. This was the case with both their male and female tutees. In fact, female tutors interrupted their female tutees more often than they did their male tutees. Male tutors showed the same pattern. From the student point of view, then, female tutees received more interruptions from both male and female tutors.

Pragmatic Features

Frequency of suggestions. As Table 6 demonstrates, female tutors were only slightly more likely to make suggestions to their tutees than were male tutors. A good deal of individual variation affects these means, however. For example, male Tutor 10 and female Tutor 6 far exceeded the mean number of suggestions for their genders with both their male and female tutees. But in general, both male and female tutors were more likely to offer suggestions to their

Table 4

Time at Talk

Male Tutors	Number of Turns	Total Tutor Words	Tutor Words per Turn	Total Student Words	Student Words per Turn	T : S Words per Turn
1 with F	37	2999	81	334	9	9.0 : 1
1 with M	171	4189	25	1890	11	2.3 : 1
2 with F	143	2432	17	4590	32	1.0 : 1.9
2 with M	100	2364	24	2882	29	1.0 : 1.2
9 with F	48	2381	50	1848	39	1.3 : 1
9 with M	43	1758	41	1231	29	1.4 : 1
10 with F	75	3640	49	1818	24	2.0 : 1
10 with M	31	3902	126	291	9	14.0 : 1
11 with F	140	4448	32	1420	10	3.2 : 1
11 with M	90	2176	24	1613	18	1.4 : 1
Mean w/ F	**443**	**15900**	**36**	**10010**	**23**	**1.6 : 1**
Mean w/ M	**345**	**12213**	**35**	**6294**	**18**	**1.9 : 1**
Composite	**878**	**30289**	**35**	**17917**	**20**	**1.8 : 1**

Female Tutors	Number of Turns	Total Tutor Words	Tutor Words per Turn	Total Student Words	Student Words per Turn	T : S Words per Turn
3 with F	24	2251	94	384	16	5.9 : 1
3 with M	38	1082	29	1043	28	1 : 1
4 with F	145	4236	29	2467	17	1.7 : 1
4 with M	140	3694	26	2564	19	1.4 : 1
6 with F	32	2616	82	219	7	11.7 : 1
6 with M	22	2846	129	323	15	8.6 : 1
7 with F	100	2982	30	2768	28	1 : 1
7 with M	96	4965	52	1539	16	3.3 : 1
8 with F	91	4105	45	1383	15	3.0 : 1
8 with M	88	5100	58	920	11	5.3 : 1
Mean w/ F	**392**	**16190**	**41**	**7221**	**18**	**2.3 : 1**
Mean w/ M	**384**	**17687**	**46**	**6389**	**17**	**2.7 : 1**
Composite	**776**	**33877**	**44**	**13610**	**18**	**2.4 : 1**

Table 5

Interruptions as a Percentage of Total Tutor Turn Transitions

Male Tutors	With Female	With Male
1	8.1	27.5
2	13.3	10.0
9	25.0	14.0
10	25.3	9.7
11	20.7	27.8
Mean	**18.5**	**17.8**

Female Tutors	With Female	With Male
3	41.7	34.2
4	24.8	3.6
6	12.5	18.2
7	25.0	11.5
8	25.3	29.5
Mean	**25.9**	**19.4**

Table 6

Tutor Suggestions per Turn

Male Tutors	Turns	Suggestions	Suggestions/Turn
1 with F	37	47	1.27
1 with M	171	78	0.46
2 with F	143	41	0.29
2 with M	100	52	0.52
9 with F	48	36	0.75
9 with M	43	30	0.70
10 with F	75	73	0.97
10 with M	31	62	2.00
11 with F	140	88	0.63
11 with M	90	31	0.33
Mean with F	**443**	**285**	**0.64**
Mean with M	**435**	**253**	**0.58**
Composite	**878**	**538**	**0.61**

Female Tutors	Turns	Suggestions	Suggestions/Turn
3 with F	24	42	1.75
3 with M	38	15	0.40
4 with F	145	72	0.50
4 with M	140	46	0.32
6 with F	32	45	2.09
6 with M	22	39	1.77
7 with F	100	67	0.58
7 with M	96	62	0.65
8 with F	91	39	0.68
8 with M	88	88	1.00
Mean with F	**392**	**265**	**0.68**
Mean with M	**384**	**250**	**0.65**
Composite	**776**	**515**	**0.66**

female tutees; in fact, four of the five male tutors and three of the female tutors followed this pattern. From the student point of view, then, female tutees received more suggestions from both male and female tutors.

Suggestion type. When selecting suggestion types, both male and female tutors favored second-person (2p) modals. However, as Table 7 shows, female tutors chose 1p and 2p modals more often than their male counterparts, while male tutors were more likely to select the most forceful suggestion type, imperatives, as well as the least forceful but also the least frequent types, interrogatives and indirect suggestions. Individual variation may account for part of this distribution; standard deviations are larger for 2p modal and imperative suggestions, the most frequent in the sample. Highest individual use of any category is indicated in bold print. Individual results parallel those for the tutors as a whole, suggesting a gender-based difference that cannot be ascribed solely to individual variability or gender of the recipient.

These tables also show the breakdown of the five suggestion formulas compounded with mitigation. They indicate that most tutors chose from a varied palette of options of differing illocutionary force and mitigation patterns when offering suggestions. However, certain types were avoided by some tutors. For example, Tutor 3 avoided interrogatives in both of her tutorials. In addition, certain types were preferred by specific tutors, such as unmitigated imperatives by Tutor 6 with both tutees. In these cases, tutors often contravened the norm for their genders.

Table 9 shows male and female suggestion types with their respective tutees grouped according to gender. Results here diverge; while both male and female tutors offered more indirect, 2p modal, and imperative suggestions to their male tutees, male tutors offered more interrogatives and 1p modals to their female tutees while female tutors used more interrogatives with their male tutees and more 1p modals with their female tutees. However, no pattern could be found in the distribution of mitigation in suggestions given to same- versus different-sex tutees.

Table 7

Suggestion Types and Distributions

Male Tutors

Suggestion Type	Tutor 1 with F	Tutor 1 with M	Tutor 2 with F	Tutor 2 with M	Tutor 9 with F	Tutor 9 with M	Tutor 10 with F	Tutor 10 with M	Tutor 11 with F	Tutor 11 with M	MEAN	SD
Total	47	78	39	52	36	30	73	62	88	31	Total = 536	
Indirect	5 = 11%	16 = 20%	8 = 21%	2 = 4%	2 = 5%	**10 = 33%**	9 = 12%	9 = 15%	8 = 9%	7 = 23%	**15.3%**	**8.5**
Interrogative	3 = 7%	8 = 11%	**9 = 23%**	0	1 = 3%	2 = 6%	1 = 1%	1 = 2%	10 = 12%	0	**6.5%**	**6.9**
1p Modal	5 = 11%	7 = 9%	1 = 3%	4 = 8%	4 = 11%	0	4 = 6%	3 = 5%	**19 = 21%**	4 = 13%	**8.7%**	**5.6**
2p Modal	19 = 39%	26 = 33%	14 = 36%	**28 = 53%**	4 = 11%	6 = 21%	30 = 41%	30 = 48%	30 = 34%	14 = 45%	**36.1%**	**11.9**
Imperative	15 = 32%	21 = 27%	7 = 17%	18 = 35%	**25 = 70%**	12 = 40%	29 = 40%	19 = 30%	21 = 24%	6 = 19%	**33.4%**	**14.3**

Female Tutors

Suggestion Type	Tutor 3 with F	Tutor 3 with M	Tutor 4 with F	Tutor 4 with M	Tutor 6 with F	Tutor 6 with M	Tutor 7 with F	Tutor 7 with M	Tutor 8 with F	Tutor 8 with M	MEAN	SD
Total	42	15	72	46	67	39	58	62	62	88	Total = 551	
Indirect	2 = 5%	1 = 7%	8 = 11%	8 = 17%	9 = 13%	**7 = 18%**	1 = 2%	6 = 10%	10 = 16%	10 = 10%	**10.9%**	**5.0**
Interrogative	0	0	7 = 10%	**8 = 17%**	0	2 = 5%	7 = 13%	1 = 2%	0	7 = 8%	**5.8%**	**5.9**
1p Modal	7 = 17%	**4 = 27%**	13= 18%	2 =4%	4 = 7%	2 = 5%	9 = 15%	3 = 4%	6 = 10%	5 = 6%	**11.3%**	**7.3**
2p Modal	20 = 47%	7 = 46%	21 = 29%	9 = 20%	24 = 35%	8 = 20%	22 = 38%	**41 = 67%**	35 = 56%	56 = 64%	**42.2%**	**16.0**
Imperative	13 = 31%	3 = 20%	23 = 32%	19 = 42%	30 = 45%	**20 = 52%**	19 = 32%	11 = 18%	11 = 18%	10 = 11%	**30.1%**	**12.7**

Table 8

Suggestion Mitigation: Male Tutors

Suggestion Type	Mitigation	Tutor 1 with F	Tutor 1 with M	Tutor 2 with F	Tutor 2 with M	Tutor 9 with F	Tutor 9 with M	Tutor 10 with F	Tutor 10 with M	Tutor 11 with F	Tutor 11 with M
n	M / U	47	78	39	52	36	30	73	62	88	31
Indirect	M	1 = 2%	8 = 10%	7 = 18%	2 = 4%	2 = 6%	10 = 33%	6 = 8%	5 = 8%	5 = 6%	5 = 16%
	U	4 = 9%	8 = 10%	1 = 3%	0	0	0	3 = 4%	4 = 6%	3 = 3%	2 = 6%
Interrogative	M	1 = 2%	7 = 10%	5 = 13%	0	1 = 3%	1 = 3%	0	1 = 2%	4 = 5%	0
	U	2 = 4%	1 = 1%	4 = 10%	0	0	1 = 3%	1 = 1%	0	6 = 7%	0
1p Modal	M	4 = 9%	4 = 5%	1 = 3%	1 = 2%	3 = 8%	0	2 = 3%	0	9 = 10%	1 = 3%
	U	1 = 2%	3 = 4%	0	3 = 6%	1 = 3%	0	2 = 3%	3 = 5%	10 = 11%	3 = 10%
2p Modal	M	**12 = 25%**	4 = 5%	**12 = 30%**	**23 = 44%**	4 = 11%	4 = 13%	16 = 22%	14 = 23%	**24 = 27%**	**10 = 33%**
	U	7 = 15%	**22 = 28%**	2 = 5%	5 = 10%	0	2 = 7%	14 = 19%	**16 = 25%**	6 = 7%	4 = 13%
Imperative	M	9 = 19%	5 = 6%	4 = 10%	6 = 11%	**15 = 41%**	**7 = 24%**	8 = 11%	5 = 8%	11 = 13%	2 = 6%
	U	6 = 13%	16 = 21%	3 = 8%	12 = 23%	10 = 28%	5 = 17%	**21 = 29%**	14 = 23%	10 = 11%	4 = 13%

Table 9

Suggestion Mitigation: Female Tutors

Suggestion Type	Mitigation	Tutor 3 with F	Tutor 3 with M	Tutor 4 with F	Tutor 4 with M	Tutor 6 with F	Tutor 6 with M	Tutor 7 with F	Tutor 7 with M	Tutor 8 with F	Tutor 8 with M
n	M / U	42	15	72	46	67	39	58	62	62	88
Indirect	M	2 = 5%	1 = 7%	6 = 8%	6 = 13%	4 = 6%	3 = 8%	1 =2%	4 = 6%	8 = 13%	6 =6%
	U	0	0	2 = 3%	2 =4%	5 = 7%	4 = 10%	0	2 = 3%	2 = 3%	4 = 5%
Interrogative	M	0	0	5 = 7%	2 = 4%	0	0	3 = 5%	0	0	2 = 2%
	U	0	0	2= 3%	6 = 13%	0	2 = 5%	4 = 7%	1 = 2%	0	5 = 6%
1p Modal	M	5 = 12%	**3 = 20%**	4 = 6%	1 = 2%	3 = 5%	0	2 = 3%	1 = 2%	4 = 6%	4 = 5%
	U	2 = 5%	1= 6%	9 = 12%	1 = 2%	1 = 2%	2 = 5%	7 = 12%	2 = 3%	2 = 3%	1 = 1%
2p Modal	M	7 = 17%	7 = 47%	11= 15%	5 = 11%	**19 = 28%**	5 = 12%	11 = 19%	19 = 31%	14 = 23%	**33 = 37%**
	U	**13 = 31%**	0	10 = 14%	4 = 9%	5 = 7%	3 = 8%	11 = 19%	**22 = 36%**	**21= 34%**	23 = 26%
Imperative	M	3 = 7%	**3 = 20%**	10 = 14%	9 = 20%	11 = 17%	**10 = 26%**	2 = 3%	4 = 6%	6 = 10%	5 = 6%
	U	10 = 23%	0	**13 = 18%**	**10 = 22%**	**19 = 28%**	**10 = 26%**	**17 =30%**	7 = 11%	5 = 8%	5 = 6%

The percent of mitigated suggestions regardless of category is shown in Table 10. Contrary to the hypothesis and preliminary results, on the whole male tutors were more likely to mitigate their suggestions than female tutors (58% and 52%, respectively). The difference is even greater when Tutor 3 with M (93%) is excluded from the calculation, and a female tutor mean of 48% results, a full ten points below the male mean. Both male and female tutors tended to mitigate more with different-sex tutees, that is, male tutors with female tutees, and female tutors with their male tutees.

Table 10

Suggestion Types with Male and Female Tutees

Suggestion Formula		Male Tutors with F	Male Tutors with M	Female Tutors with F	Female Tutors with M
Indirect	**T**	**32 = 11%**	**44 = 17%**	**30 = 10%**	**32 = 13%**
	M	21	30	21	20
	U	11	14	9	12
Interrogative	**T**	**24 = 9%**	**11 = 4%**	**14 = 4%**	**18 = 7%**
	M	11	9	8	4
	U	13	2	6	14
1p Modal	**T**	**33 = 12%**	**18 = 8%**	**39 = 13%**	**16 = 6%**
	M	19	6	18	9
	U	14	12	21	7
2p Modal	**T**	**97 = 34%**	**104= 41%**	**122 = 41%**	**121 = 49%**
	M	68	55	62	69
	U	29	49	60	52
Imperative	**T**	**97 = 34%**	**104 = 41%**	**122 = 41%**	**121 = 49%**
	M	47	25	32	31
	U	50	51	64	32
TOTAL		**283**	**253**	**301**	**250**

Mitigation strategy. Table 11 shows the ten mitigation strategies used by female and male tutors with all of their tutees. While females most often chose hedges, subjectivizers were first ranked by males. However, if the categories of hedge and downgrader are collapsed, as they are in many analyses of mitigation, both male and females chose this as their most common strategy. A salient category difference, however, is the number of cajolers versus subjectivizers. Whereas male tutors used almost as many of both, female tutors used twice as many subjectivizers as they did cajolers. Use of upgraders is roughly parallel.

Table 11

Percent of Mitigated Suggestions

Male Tutors	With Female Student	With Male Student
1	57	36
2	74	62
9	69	73
10	44	40
11	60	58
Mean	**61**	**54**
Female Tutors	With Female Student	With Male Student
3	40	93
4	50	50
6	55	46
7	33	45
8	52	57
Mean	**46**	**58**

Discussion

Interactional Features

To summarize the findings on the interactional features of time at talk and interruptions at turn transitions, the hypothesis of male dominance was not generally supported. Female tutors overall were more voluble, a finding that is certainly not frequent in the 63 studies reported by James and Drakich (1993). The tendency of female tutors to interrupt more may be explained in terms of collaborative or cooperative overlapping talk (James & Clarke, 1993; Tannen, 1993), or differing male and female views as to what constitutes a "floor" (Edelsky, 1993), although no means of discovering this were built into this study. In terms of who gets interrupted, James and Clarke point out that in no study that they know of have males interrupted other males more than they have interrupted females (1993, p. 255). Their finding is corroborated here. Overall, the similarity in male and female interactional behavior implies that institutional role may have a stronger influence than gender on interaction patterns.

One factor that emerges as a determinant of interactional dominance may not be tutor gender so much as length of tutorial. Indeed, an inverse relationship can be argued for number of turns and ratio of tutor to student time at talk: The largest ratios occurred in two of the shortest tutorials. As tutorials approached or exceeded 100 turns, ratios of time at talk tended to balance out. Another feature, number of suggestions per turn, also increased as tutorial length decreased. In the case of interruptions, however, length of tutorials did not seem to have this effect.

Pragmatic Features

To summarize the findings on the pragmatic features of suggestion frequency, type, and mitigation, the hypothesis of male dominance was only supported in the last two cases. Male and female tutors patterned similarly in offering more suggestions to their female tutees, although each group tended to mitigate more suggestions offered to different-sex tutees. The split distribution of male tutor suggestions as forceful imperatives on the one hand and less forceful indirect and interrogative suggestions on the other, in contrast to the 1p and 2p modal suggestions of female tutors is similar to that found by West (1990) in her investigation of the directives issued by male

and female physicians. West, however, argued that indirect and interrogative suggestions pack as hard a punch as imperatives because of the intonation with which they are delivered and the directive-response sequences in which they occur. She also characterized female use of 1p and 2p modal suggestions as confirmation of their greater tendnecy toward collaboration even in institutional contexts. West's observations seem to be borne out here.

Alternatively, accommodation theory could be invoked to explain the convergence of male tutors and the divergence of female tutors to same-sex tutees in the selection of suggestion strategies, and the convergence of both genders to different-sex tutees in the percentage of mitigated suggestions. The overall results, however, cannot be explained completely by any one of the theories of language and gender, whether dominance, cultural, or accommodation.

As in the case of interactional features, length of tutorial seems to play some role in the selection of suggestion types and mitigation. The time constraint of institutional discourse may once again be seen as one of its chief defining factors; in their need to observe institutionally- or self-imposed time limits, tutors modify their conversational contributions in ways that create discourses different from less temporally constrained interactions of the same type, and even more distinct from those of "ordinary" conversation.

Conclusion

Perhaps at this point I'll try to answer the two basic research questions:

(1) Do female tutors as institutional representatives employ the same interactional and pragmatic features in their language as male tutors do? Yes, and no. Only small variations in certain behaviors are evident in the data. While these indicate tendencies beyond the effects of individual variation, the only robust results were seen in the selection of suggestion type and the distribution of mitigation strategies.

(2) Does higher status in some way mitigate the effect of gender differences? Yes, in that male and female language is probably more alike than it is different because of the institutional status of the tutor. In this framework, gender differences may play only a minor role.

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